EMPIRE STATE PARTNERSHIP PROJECT: AN ARTS CONNECTION
WITH A FOCUS ON IMPROVING LEARNING VIA TECHNOLOGY

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The Lewiston-Porter Central School District in Youngstown, New York, and the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University have collaborated since 1997 to strengthen the role of the arts in the current standards reform movement via an Empire State Partnership (ESP) Program. This program is an interagency collaboration between the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York State Department of Education (SED). It is designed to identify, develop, and support best practices in educational and cultural collaborations that focus on achieving the New York State Learning Standards.

The Lewiston-Porter and Castellani Art Museum ESP team has consistently encouraged secondary school students involved in the various curriculum activities of the partnership to use their experiences to actively construct understandings that make sense to them and to apply their expanded understandings to authentic situations (Olsen, et al, 2000). This constructivist approach to contemporary secondary education (Eggen and Kauchak, 1997) and contemporary museum education (Hein, 1999), has been facilitated and enhanced because of the use of technology.

The utilization of technology in the program has reflected a philosophy of collaboration and curriculum infusion whereby the cultural partner responds to needs expressed by the school, rather than applying technology as another curricular layer. This model has proven successful in other contemporary educational settings (Moffitt, 2000). The integration of new technology through this ESP program has been a natural – and necessary – outcome. Technology has been instrumental in deepening the impact of the project in the high school curriculum and facilitating the further development and sustainability of specific ESP activities. Furthermore, technology has facilitated the integration of necessary services into the curriculum, such as graphic design and videography. These technology-oriented services, once relegated to "outside" professional contacts, became "in-house" student activities because of the needs identified by the ESP team.

Consistent with the characteristics of effective twenty-first century schools and school systems (AASA, 1999), there are three major roles that technology has played in shaping and sustaining this partnership:

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A. Technology has promoted authentic learning experiences for students that address learning standards in high school English, art and social studies.
B. Technology has provided students with experience in using professional tools.
C. Technology has facilitated both internal and external communications.

The following examples illustrate technology's impact on the curriculum:

1. English and art students participating in the ***Writing on the Wall*** project and exhibition have used MS Word to create interpretive wall texts and artists' statements for display at the Museum. The curatorial experience afforded by ***Writing on the Wall*** demands specific and precise use of the software for all students. They must create and submit MS Word files, email attachments, and Mac disks for their wall texts and artists' statements using a Museum-prescribed format for font, font size and page layout. This specific utilization of MS Word not only gives students authentic experience with using the application, but also ensures a uniform appearance of their work for the final exhibition held at the Museum. Through this process, the students learn that attention to detail is crucial to the success of a Museum exhibition, and is facilitated through the use of technology.

2. Art students in graphic design classes have used Adobe InDesign to create posters, flyers and other projects to publicize the many activities of the ESP Project. A need to publicize ESP activities to the community created authentic learning opportunities for students to use technology. Moreover, the use of InDesign introduced a professional graphic design tool to the art curriculum, giving the students exposure to the industry standard in their medium. The application of this software has expanded teaching capabilities, broadened and diversified the media offered by the art department, and given students a head start on proficiency with software they might well use in college and in future careers.

3. Documentation of our ESP activities necessitates photography and videography to capture the activities of visiting artists and live theatrical presentations. Videography, in particular, was introduced to the art curriculum to meet this need. Students and teachers evolved from using traditional analog video to the use of digital video and non-linear video editing, using digital video cameras, a Macintosh G4, Adobe Premiere, After Effects, and GoLive. As with the adoption of InDesign, the implementation of these videography tools created authentic learning opportunities through practical applications of technology and introduced another suite of professional tools to the art curriculum. From its roots in occasional, informal analog viedography, the student videography for ESP actually developed into a full course in videography in the art department – permanently embedding the use of this cutting-edge technology into the curriculum. Furthermore, the inception of this class has continued the diversification of media offered through the art department, bringing many "non-traditional" art students into the program.

4. Applications of technology have facilitated communication, administration and documentation within the partnership. The use of email (Outlook Express) has facilitated consistent and convenient contact and transfer of files

between the cultural and educational partners. MS Word, Quark and PowerPoint have been indispensable for the museum's curator of education to produce promotional materials, reports and presentations for ESP activities. Technology has also been instrumental to the public relations, dissemination and advocacy efforts beyond the Partnership. For example, PowerPoint and Kai's Powershow have been used to present the Partnership's work to parents, School Board members, and other ESP partnerships and Arts-in-Education programs throughout New York State. These multimedia presentations on specific ESP projects will be added to the ESP information which will soon be available (June 2001) through the Castellani Art Museum website at http://www.niagara.edu/cam.

The Empire State Partnership Project between Lewiston-Porter Central School District and the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University has successfully developed an arts connection, with a focus on improving learning via technology. The improvement in student achievement on the New York State Standards as a result of this project has been well documented (Olsen, et al., 2000). The Project has effectively coordinated methods, practices and lessons with the Standards, as advocated in contemporary literature and research (Schmoker & Marzano, 1999), and infused technology in the most appropriate fashion to free the power of students' minds (Healy, 1999). The quintessential American educational philosopher, John Dewey, would be very pleased with this partnership because it has enabled each participating student to fulfill his or her learning goals by effectively using the science, art and industry of the contemporary world (Dewey, 1902).

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